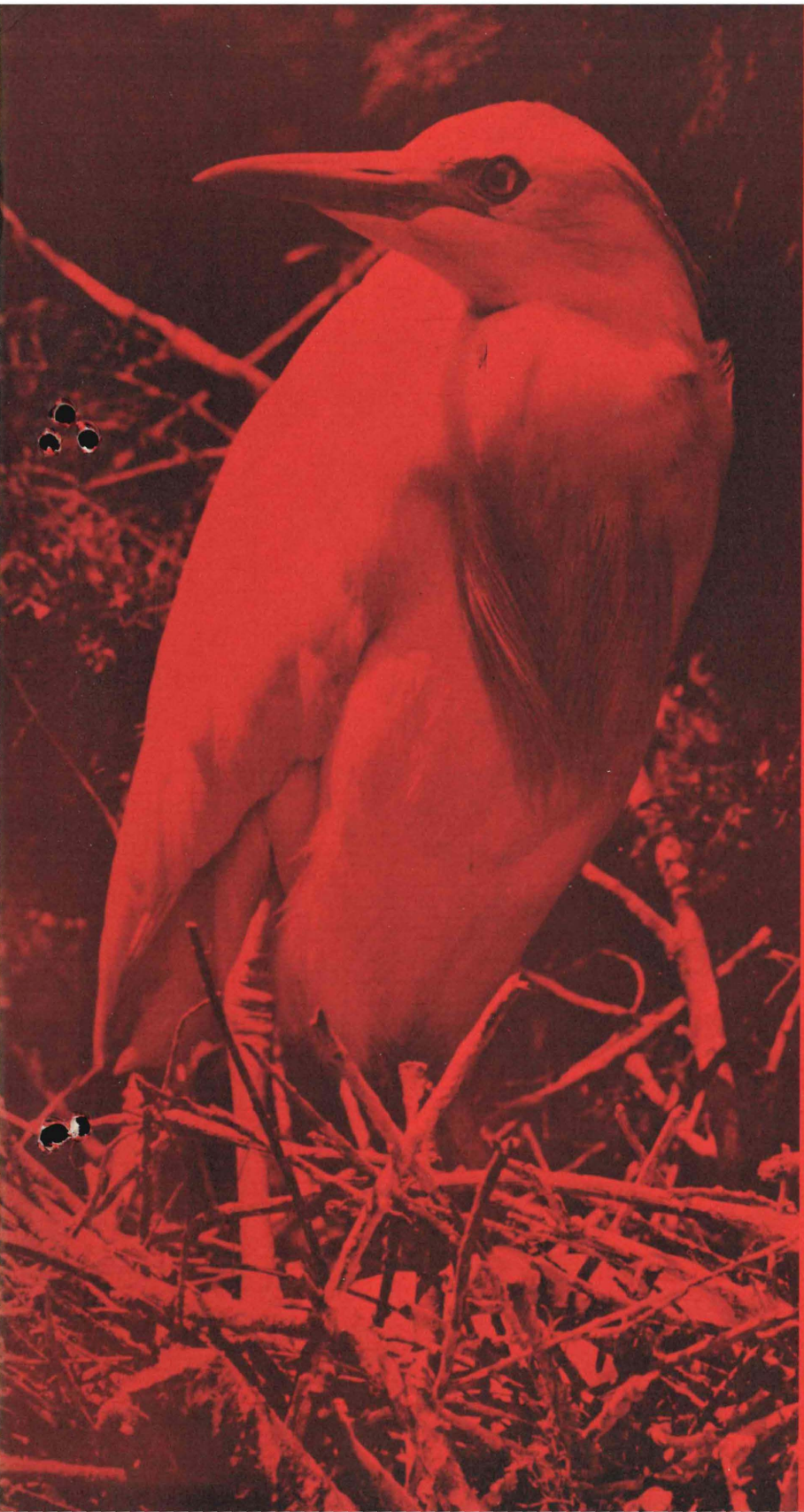


# Thames Science Center

CONNECTICUT COLL.
LIBRARY
NEW LONDON, CONN.

Naturalist notebook.

STACK

MAY
1968

# NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

MAY 1968 VOLUME III NO. 5

CONTENTS

Front Cover: Cattle Egret by D.J. Nelson, N.A.S.

Back Cover: Science Center

CHILDREN'S SECTION

Nature Calendar..... 1
Children's Corner..... 3
Activity..... 4
Rock Hounds..... 5
The Pet Corner..... 6

ADULT SECTION

Articles of Adult Interest.... 7
Discovering Nature With Your Child.....12
Field Notes .....13
Your Own Family Nature Jaunt.....15

ACTIVITIES FOR MAY

.....Inside Back Cover

Published by the

**THAMES SCIENCE CENTER**

622 Williams Street

New London, Connecticut 06320

JOHN F. GARDNER – *Executive Director*

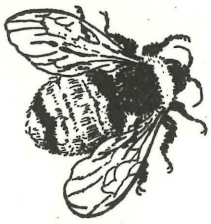
ROBERT C. DEWIRE – *Naturalist*

The NATURALIST NOTEBOOK is published monthly. Subscription available through membership only.

The Thames Science Center is a non-profit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

The active support of children and adults in the Science Center, its programs, activities and efforts is earnestly solicited.

JOHN F. GARDNER
*Editor*



# MAY'S NATURE CALENDAR

MAY is the month of the return of the insects. Although some may be seen previous to this month, the bulk arrive in May.

Ants begin another season of all work and no play, bees and wasps pollinate the spring flowers such as swamp azalea and dogwoods. Several butterflies may be found including the tiny blue spring azure and the little wood satyr which may often be seen along wooded trails.

Around ponds, the dragonflies arrive and water striders skip across the water's surface. Beneath the surface backswimmers, diving beetles and water boatmen increase their activity as the water temperature rises.

Toward the end of the month you will slap your first mosquito - a practice that will continue throughout the summer. These insect numbers increase just at the time when the bulk of the insect-eating birds such as warblers, vireos, flycatchers and swallows arrive here on migration. They serve as the food supply for these birds in Nature's delicate balance. If the insects failed to appear when the birds arrived, the results would be tragic.

The Science Center is fortunate in having a wonderful collection of insects in this area. It is the collection of the late Mr. Bertram Bruestle of Old Lyme and was presented to the Center by his wife. A portion of this excellent display will be sown at the Center during the month of May.

# MAY'S NATURE CALENDAR

May is the month of spring wildflowers and singing birds....

May 2...Hummingbirds arrive, feeding on flowering quince and other flowers.

May 5...Jack-in-the-Pulpit in flower in wet areas.

May 6...Look for Mercury in evening sky; low in west in early evening twilight.

May 7...Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Oriole add brilliant colors to our woodlands.

May 8...Dogwoods come into flower.

May 9-12...Highest P. M. tide of the year along our shores.

May 10...Common Terns return to our coast.

May 12...The full moon called the "flower moon" is out this evening. It is closest to the earth on this day.

May 14...The beautiful song of the Wood Thrush can be heard especially in the evening.

May 15...Canada Mayflower and Solomon's Seal are in flower.

May 16-19...The height of the spring bird migration in this area.

May 21...Apple blossom time.

May 23...Bluebirds are feeding their young.

May 24...Bullfrogs are calling in our large ponds.

May 26...Cuckoos arrive - two kinds - the Yellow-billed and the Black-billed.

May 31...Pink Lady-slipper is in flower. Do not pick...Protect!

# The Children's Corner

*by TRUDY GARDNER*

Connecticut has a very interesting and strange bird called a Cattle Egret, who lives in Africa, and made a very mysterious appearance in America about fifteen to twenty years ago. His picture is on the front cover of this issue.

In 1951 in a marsh at Cape May, New Jersey several people including Mr. Gardner saw two of these birds. It is a puzzle how they traveled some 6,000 miles from their home in Africa to America.

Cattle Egrets are very often seen in fields with cows, which is how they got their name.

In Africa you would see them with such animals as buffalo, zebras and elephants.

The reason these birds choose such large friends is that their companions stir up the insects that they eat such as flies and ticks and others that are hiding in the grass.

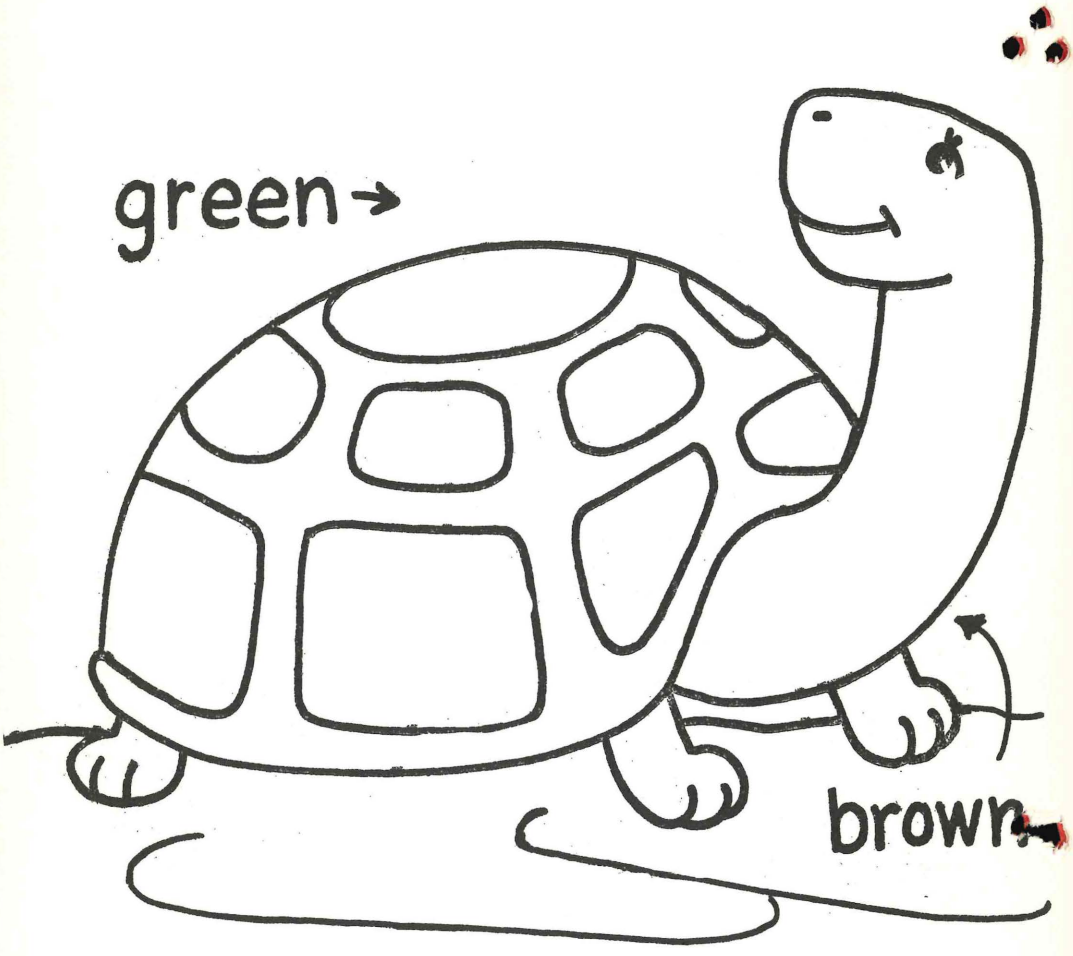
These birds are now found throughout the United States, however most of them live in Florida.

It is interesting to compare that in 1951 Cattle Egrets were such a rare bird and last year in Florida alone there were over forty-nine thousand.

So the next time you are driving in the country look for these unusual birds in pastures.

# THE TURTLE

HERE IS A PICTURE OF A TURTLE FOR YOU TO COLOR. TURTLES LIVE IN PONDS AND STREAMS. ON BRIGHT SUNNY DAYS LOOK FOR THEM SUNNING THEMSELVES ON ROCKS IN A POND.



# ROCK HOUNDS

*by JERRY THEILER*

## Cleavage and Fracture

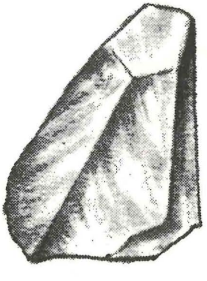
Cleavage and fracture are terms or words used to describe how a mineral breaks. If a mineral breaks with nice flat surfaces (or splits) it has cleavage. If a mineral breaks any other way and not on a flat surface, then it has fracture.

The best example of a mineral with very good cleavage is mica. Mica splits very easily in one direction. Some minerals, like calcite, split easily (or have cleavage) in three directions. Cleavage is described by terms such as excellent, good, fair or poor depending on how flat the surface is and by the number of ways it splits.

Fracture is any kind of a break that is not smooth. Words like even, uneven, shell-like and splintery are commonly used to describe the fracture.

Both the cleavage and fracture depend on how the atoms in the minerals are lined up when the mineral forms.

CALCITE



# PET CORNER

*by DAVE RICHARDS*

## FISH TALES

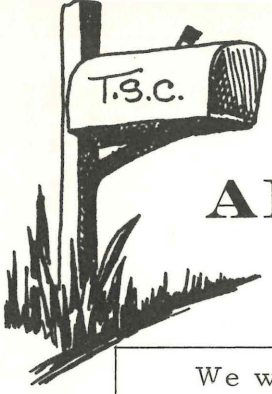
The popularity of a tropical fish is usually determined by its hardiness and beauty. The White Cloud Mountain Minnow has both of these qualities and therefore remains popular with both amateur and professional hobbyists.

White Clouds grow to about one and a half inches in length. The body color is silver gray with a white line running from head to tail. At the end of this line, on the tail, is an area of red.

Special water conditions are not as important with "Clouds" as with other fish. They do prefer water that has little acidity and is medium soft, but can live in other environments as well.

The food requirements of these fish are simple. A good dried food alternated with frozen shrimp is all that is necessary. However you should give them an occasional feeding of live food.

If you keep your "Clouds" in a tank by themselves and keep the tank well planted, you will probably end up with many more than you started, as they multiply rapidly under good living conditions.



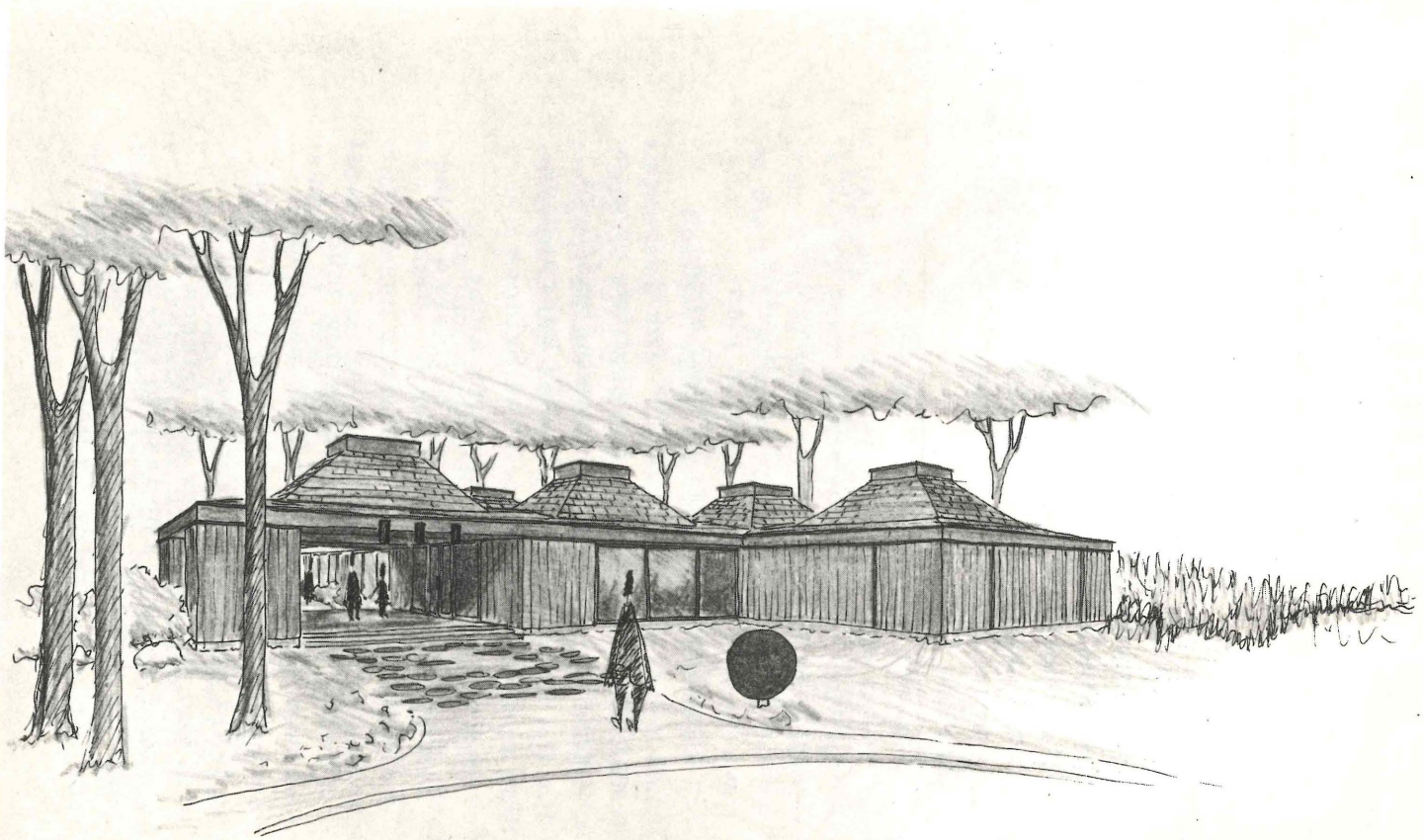

# ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST

We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook.... Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible....

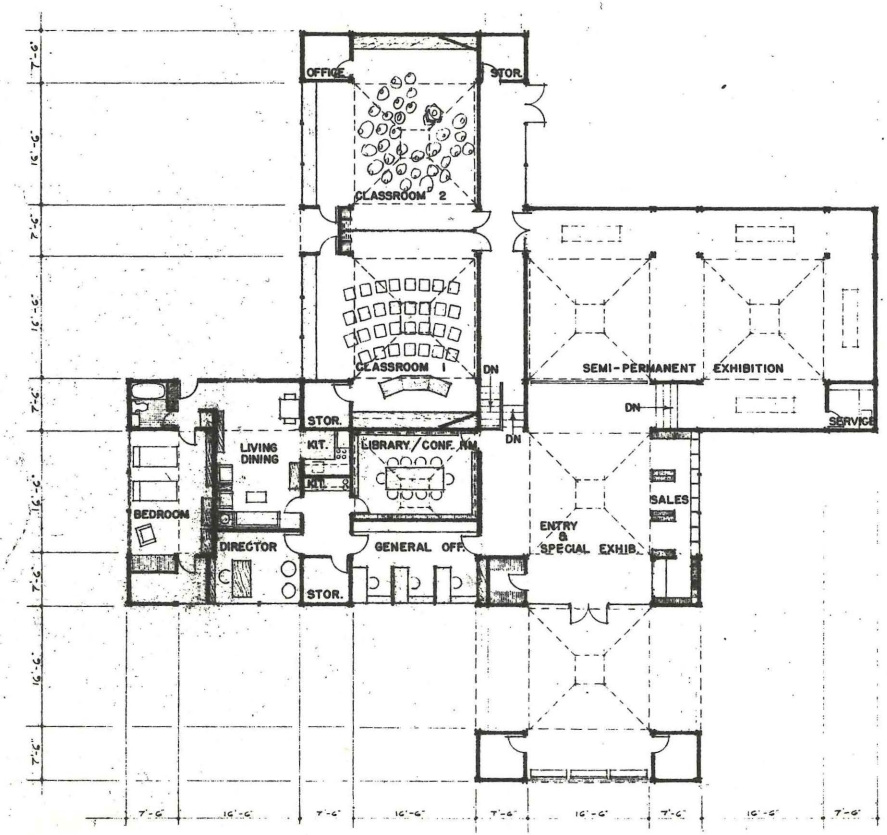
STATE-WIDE "RID LITTER DAY"....Saturday, May 25, will be designated as Connecticut "Rid Litter Day". You can help beautify your town by offering your help in planning for complete coverage of your area.

A GIANT STEP....On the next two pages you will find the architect's drawing and floor plan for the Science Center's new Interpretive Building and Headquarters. The Science Center has proposed construction along Gallows Lane on land that will be leased to the Center by Connecticut College.

No words need to be said on how much we need this new facility or how inadequate our new building is. The question of whether we can build the new Interpretive Building lies with you the members and friends of the Science Center. The task of raising $175,000. to build the Center is not easy. Perhaps you could help? If you don't - who will?



THAMES SCIENCE CENTER
NEW LONDON CONNECTICUT




THE THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

# MAIN FLOOR PLAN

PRELIMINARY

SCALE 1/8"=1'-0" DATE FEB. 19, 1968

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

2

GYPSY MOTHS.... The time has come again when everyone panics over the gypsy moth problem. Let's all keep calm and attack the problem sensibly. Wholesale spraying is not the answer.

OSPREY.... The Ospreys have returned to their nesting sites on Great Island in Lyme. There are four pairs present this year - one less than last year. A project will be undertaken this spring to transfer eggs between these nests and a successful colony in Maryland. The objective is to see whether nest failure in Lyme is due to the eggs themselves or adult behavior at the sites. Further details and results of this project will be reported on in future newsletters.

NIANTIC RIVER.... It looks like good old American apathy is winning out in regard to concern over the condition of the river. Over $200,000 has been poured into studies. It's a shame some of this hasn't been used on action.

LEDYARD.... Congratulations to the new Mashantucket Land Trust. We wish you much success in your efforts and urge our members to support you.

SPEAKERS DIRECTORY AVAILABLE.... A mimeograph Directory of Speakers on Natural History, Conservation and Related Subjects (in Conn. and vicinity) with addresses and telephone numbers is now available at the National Audubon Society's Field Office, 428 Stafford Ave., Bristol, Conn. 06010. Cost 20¢ to cover postage and handling.

CHRISTMAS COUNT SUMMARY AVAILABLE.... A summary of the 12 counts taken in Conn. is available from David Doubleday, 30 Knollwood Acres, Storrs, Conn. 06268. Send 10¢ and a self-addressed envelope.

HALEY FARM. . . . "What can I do? " - Well here it is. . . Meet at the Haley Farm on May 26th at 2:00 P. M. and by your presence show that you support the effort to preserve a piece of our environment and heritage. . . Note the Center's scheduled trip to the Peace Sanctuary will be cancelled to join in this effort.

QUINEBAUG RIVER. . . . The Connecticut Board of Fisheries and Game is trying an experimental project to stock Coho salmon in the Quinebaug River to determine if the fish will survive. Perhaps they can get past where the Oxoboxo River flows into the Thames and reach the Sound. We'll watch this closely to see what happens. By the way, what are we going to do about cleaning up the river so the salmon will have a chance and fishermen will get a crack at an 8-pound salmon? ?

MEMBERSHIP. . . . It takes a great deal of money to operate a successful Science Center. This coming year we estimate it will require almost $30, 000. 00 and this is over and above our capital building project. The money comes from three places: Gifts such as the United Fund, other funds and friends; from fees we receive for programs such as the New London School Projects and other school programs and from membership.

Southeastern Connecticut has a population of over 200, 000 people - don't you know of someone who might want to be a member of the Center - someone who would be willing to spend 5 or 10 dollars a year to benefit from our programs - someone who would like to make a commitment toward a quality environment through educational programs? Help the Center by finding us another member because without a strong membership we cannot hope to grow and carry out our efforts. . . .

# DISCOVERING NATURE WITH YOUR CHILD

*by JOHN F. GARDNER*

We as parents are facing a new challenge as spring moves into summer. This is how to handle the "lost" animal or bird that children discover each year at this time.

"Lost" animals are a popular myth. Wild animals are rarely lost in their natural environment. Statistics from the American Humane Association tell us that nine out of ten times when humans encounter wildlife babies, the animals are already home. You or your child are the intruder. The mother doubtlessly knows the exact spot where she left her young. Therefore remind your children if they "find" a wild animal it is best to leave it alone. Uninjured animals can best fend for themselves.

If you or your child come upon an injured animal, the best thing to do is notify the agency responsible for the care of wildlife. We suggest you call the Connecticut Humane Association at 442-8538. This agency is best equipped to handle injured animals. Above all DO NOT MOVE OR HANDLE THE ANIMAL UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

For those of you who for some reason find yourself with the animal in your kitchen in spite of the above, send for the Science Center's pamphlet titled "Care of Wild Animals and Birds". It will explain the emergency or temporary care you can give until the animal is ready to be released again.

Remember, it is against the law to keep any wild animal in captivity. A State permit is required to do this.

# FIELD NOTES

March 15 - April 15

Saybrook and Lyme: Fifty-five RUDDY DUCKS were in South Cove, Saybrook on March 31st. To date, there are 4 pairs of OSPREYS on Great Island and 1 pair at Griswold Point. Two TURKEY VULTURES were at Great Island on March 30th.

East Lyme and Niantic: At Gorton's Pond there was a surprisingly large flock of 24 RING-NECKED DUCKS on March 16th. An early flock of TREE SWALLOWS numbering 25 birds were there on the 23rd. The first OSPREY seen was on the 23rd at Rocky Neck. On April 3rd, a spectacular flock of 75 SNOW GEESE along with three SNOW-BLUE GOOSE HYBRIDS were seen between Black Point and Giant's Neck.

Waterford and New London: TRAILING ARBUTUS flowered on April 10th and CINNAMON FERN fiddleheads were up on the 4th. HORSETAILS were up at the Center on the 4th and FORSYTHIA flowered there on the 12th. WOOD FROGS were calling on the 19th of March and SPRING PEEPERS joined the chorus on the 20th. PAINTED TURTLES were sunning themselves on rocks in Waterford on the 30th.

At Harkness Park, GREATER YELLOW-LEGS arrived on March 28th and a drake EUROPEAN WIDGEON was present on March 31st and moved between there and Eastern Point for the next 10 days. A remarkably early adult LITTLE BLUE HERON was seen there on April 14th. A PINE WARBLER was

at the Arboretum on April 2nd and a PALM WARBLER was there on the 7th. A DICKCISSEL is coming to a feeder on Nameaug Avenue in New London. CAROLINA and WINTER WRENS are singing in a wooded area off Great Neck Road and BARRED OWLS are nesting off Great Neck Road and Mary Butler Drive.

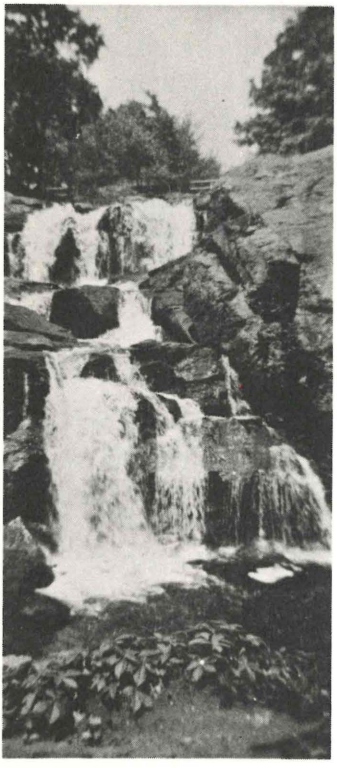
Mystic, Ledyard and Stonington: The PHOEBE first arrived at Shewville Road in Ledyard on March 23rd and two pairs of WOOD DUCKS were there on the 22nd. Two COMMON SNIPE were seen on Iron St. in Ledyard on April 3rd. In Noank, KILLDEERS arrived on March 25th and a SAPSUCKER was present on April 1st. At Barn Island a DEKAY'S SNAKE was caught on March 30th and first arrivals there on that day included PINTAIL, BLUEWINGED TEAL AND COMMON EGRET. The first PURPLE MARTIN arrived there on April 14th.

Rhode Island Shoreline: BRANT numbered up to 300 birds on April 6th. The first PIPING PLOVERS arrived on March 30th along with a WATER PIPIT. At Galilee, 8 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and a COMMON EGRET were seen on March 28th. Four LESSER YELLOWLEGS were at Card Pond near Moonstone on the 30th.

Contributors to this column were: Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Grey Butcher, Marion Clarke, Mrs. Philip Dewire, Robert Dewire, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eastman, Mr. and Mrs. John Gardner, Helen Gilman, Rick Holloway Capt. John Kinsey, Sam Knox, Mary Laffargue, Paul Spitzer and Mary Jean Williams.

# YOUR OWN FAMILY NATURE JAUNT *by BOB DEWIRE*

## DEVIL'S HOPYARD



The Devil's Hopyard State Park is just far enough north of the coast to attract several species of birds that we do not normally find in the New London area. Although there are many places to walk, the trail I found to be both the prettiest and the most rewarding is the one that follows the brook below Chapman Falls.

To start this trip, park in the parking area at the top of the waterfall. The pond across the street from the falls is a very good place to find yellow warblers, redstarts and least flycatchers, giving their sharp two-noted "che-beck" call. From here cross the street and start down the path to the bottom of the falls. The large amount of water in the brook at this time of the year makes the waterfall look all the more spectacular. From here, the trail follows the stream and comes to a small covered bridge crossing over it. Every year a pair of phoebes nest in the bridge on the crossbeams. Both the birds and nest will be easily seen. The trail winds through a wet brushy area where both Canada and hooded warblers may be found. The beautiful black-

winged damselflies, with their brilliant green irridescent bodies will flit down the trail ahead of you.

The trail then winds into a stand of large hemlocks. These trees are in excess of 80 feet high and their dense crown results in virtually no ground cover. A couple of these trees have fallen over exposing the tremendous root systems. Where this has happened, light is able to stream into the woods and strike the ground, allowing many small plants to begin growing.

The blackburnian and black-throated green warblers sing their high pitched songs from the tops of these trees. Also, the uncommon worm-eating warbler may be found nesting here. The Louisiana waterthrush flies up and down the brook singing its loud and clear song. Other interesting birds present include the ruffed grouse, which may be heard drumming in May, the broad-winged hawk and the rarely seen pileated woodpecker. Red squirrels and chipmunks may be seen regularly and the tracks of raccoon, deer and fox may be seen in muddy areas along the brook.

This trail is also the return trail unless you care to try and cross the brook by hopping rocks and then follow it back on the opposite side. There will be a Saturday morning field trip on May 25th when this trail will be taken. I hope that you will come along and see this beautiful state park.

# ACTIVITIES FOR MAY

For listing of the 13 Family Nature Jaunts for May, see the special Field Trip Brochure. If further information is desired, call the Science Center at 443-4295.

May 11 -- 10:30 to 12:00 a.m. -- A special workshop for Members in grades 1, 2 and 3 titled "Something for Mother". Registration is required by May 7th (limit 15). 50¢ fee.

May 18 -- 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. -- Special exhibit featuring the common insects present in New London during the month of May will be featured today at the Center. This exhibit will remain on display for a month.

May 25 -- 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. -- Junior Nature Jaunt for members in grades 4, 5 and 6 to Stoneacre Farm. Meet at corner of North Main Street and Route 1 in Stonington: Registration required by May 22nd (limit 20).

---

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

*We Need Your Active Membership and Support*

**THAMES SCIENCE CENTER**

622 WILLIAMS ST., NEW LONDON, CONN. 06320
Phone: 443-4295

Annual dues: 12 months from _____

Name _____

Street _____ City _____

Phone _____ Zip Code _____

CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ Annual $5 (each adult member of family)
- ☐ Family $10
- ☐ Supporting $25
- ☐ Annual Patron $50
- ☐ Organization $10
- ☐ Junior (under 16) $3
- ☐ A special gift toward support of the Science Center effort is included $_____

*Please make checks payable to The Thames Science Center*
*Contributions are tax deductible*

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER
622 Williams Street
New London, Connecticut 06320
*RETURN REQUESTED*

*Non-Profit Org.*
*U. S. Postage*
*PAID*
*Quaker Hill, Ct.*
*Permit No. 9*

PALMER LIBRARY
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
NEW LONDON, CONN. 06320

*MEMBER UNITED FUND*